

Angie Lake

From: Amy Lynn Smith <alswrite@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 3, 2014 5:01 PM
To: Angie Lake
Subject: Testimony in opposition of HB 5958

Hi Angie -

Please enter my written testimony below into the record for the Dec. 4th committee hearing on HB 5958. Thank you.

~ Amy

Amy Lynn Smith
alswrite@gmail.com | o: +1.248.643.7920 | m: +1.248.417.3047
web: alswrite.com | twitter: @alswrite

Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to voice my opposition to HB 5958, also known as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Michigan does not need this legislation, which would not add any protections but could put the rights of many of our state's citizens at risk.

Freedom of religion is an important part of being an American, and that right is ensured in the federal and state constitutions. Americans are not suffering religious persecution — a very real problem in other parts of the world. Churches are not being forced to perform same-sex marriages, and businesses are not being asked to offer any accommodation that is not already required by law. No law is forcing religious institutions to hire people who do not share their beliefs.

However, many people in Michigan could be discriminated against if HB 5958 becomes law.

As a single woman, I could be refused housing, a job or even medical treatment if someone felt my lifestyle doesn't match their religious beliefs. It doesn't even have to be an "official" religion. This may sound extreme, but under the poorly written language of HB 5958, someone could say their religious beliefs prevent them from working alongside unmarried women, and their rights would trump mine.

Businesses could refuse to serve members of the LGBT community, even if their business has nothing to do with faith. Medical practitioners could refuse to perform procedures such as blood transfusions or vaccinations because of their beliefs. Anyone could be denied housing or job opportunities simply because the landlord or boss disagrees with their faith.

HB 5958 would not protect anyone's beliefs. Instead, it would open the floodgates to allow people of any religion to discriminate against anyone of another religion. Those who irrationally think they are being persecuted now would be at risk of bona fide persecution because it would become legal to discriminate on the basis of religious beliefs.

Plus, who defines these beliefs? Who determines if they are sincere? Who pays for the legal fees and costs incurred by our state's court system?

No one in Michigan is being persecuted because of their religion. Let's not start now. The religious liberties of every American — and Michigander — are enshrined in the Constitution. HB 5958 would serve no purpose but to allow discrimination in the name of religion.

Please, do not let this bill go any further and, instead, focus on making Michigan a better place to live for every single one of its residents. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Amy Lynn Smith
Birmingham